THE LADY OF THE FAN

(Continued from Page 6.)
head, and murmured some words the
sage could not understand. He re
peated his question, but received no
reply. She took no further notice of
him, and all her force seemed to have



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The sage withdrew regretfully. Then an old woman whom he had not before noticed motioned to him to follow her. She led the way into the shadow of a high mound and said:

"I heard you ask my mistress a question that she did not answer. I will satisfy your curiosity if, in return, you will give me some money to buy from the priest a strip of paper that will prolong my life."

Tchouand-Tsen took a silver piece from his purse, and the woman began her story.

"The lady you just saw is Mme. Lu, the widow of a scholar named Tao, who died fifteen days ago, after a long illness, and the grave she is fanning is that of her husband. They loved each other devotedly. Even on his deathbed Tao could not bear to think of leaving his wife in the bloom of her youth and beauty. Weeping at his bedside, which she had hardly left

during her husband's illness, Mme. Lu vowed before the gods that she would not survive him, but that she would share his tomb. Tao said to her: "Madame, do not swear that."

"'Anyway,' she said, 'if I must live after you are gone, believe me, I shall never become the wife of another.'

"Tao said again: 'Madame, do not swear that.'

"'Oh, my dear husband, let me swear that I shall not wed for five years at least."

"'Madame, do not swear that. Swear only to be faithful to my memory as long as the earth is moist above me,' said Tao.

"Then Mme. Lu swore a solemn oath and the good Tao closed his eyes forever. The wife's grief exceeded all imagination. She wept constantly and even tore her beautiful flesh with her sharp little nails. After a time she became calmer and three days after her husband's death she was quite herself.

"She was then told that a young man, a former pupil of Tao's wished to see her to let her know the share he bore in her mourning. She could not refuse him admittance, such being his reason, so she sighed and consented to receive him. The young man, who was very handsome, talked a little of Tao and a great deal about herself. He assured her that she was charming and that he already loved her. She refused to listen to him. He promised to return. And while awaiting his coming Mme. Lu spends all her time trying to dry the earth over her husband's grave, as you have seen "

When the old woman had finished her tale the wise man reflected: "Youth is short and love is sweet. After all, Mme. Lu is an honorable woman who does not wish to break the oath she made."—Translated from the French of Anatole France by H. Twitchell.

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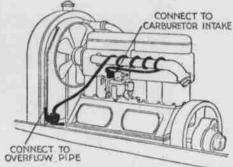
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